



PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

**PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION OPEN DAY
19 FEBRUARY 2008 - LEEDS TOWN HALL**

The Press Complaints Commission is the regulatory body for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK. It upholds a Code of Practice to which editors must adhere, and which acts to protect individuals against intrusion, discrimination, harassment and inaccurate reporting.

If you are interested in press standards, need to know what to do if you have a complaint about a newspaper or magazine article, or are interested in the future of your local newspaper, come along and find out more.

Afternoon surgery - Albert Room from 2.30-3.45pm: an informal surgery for anyone who would like more information about the PCC. You can just pop in to pick up some printed information or talk directly with a senior member of the Commission's staff.

Question Time – Albert Room from 4pm: an opportunity to grill a panel of PCC representatives, including its Chairman Sir Christopher Meyer, Director Tim Toulmin, a lay Commission member and a representative of the newspaper industry.

Venue: Albert Room, Leeds Town Hall, The Headrow, Leeds

The event is free and open to anyone who wishes to attend. If you wish to reserve a space please contact Tonia Milton on tonia.milton@pcc.org.uk or by telephone 020 7831 0022

www.pcc.org.uk



Press Complaints Commission

An E mail version is available upon request.

Leeds open day

19 February 2008

PCC representatives visited Leeds in February, for the 10th in its programme of Open Days. Over 40 attendees from a range of backgrounds – including the NHS, Leeds City Council, ITV, community groups as well as a number of students from local colleges – joined in a lively debate at the city's Town Hall about newspaper and magazine regulation.

After a brief introduction to the work of the PCC, the PCC's Chairman, Sir Christopher Meyer, invited the audience to put their questions to a panel of experts, which consisted of the PCC's Director, Tim Toulmin; Peter Charlton, editor of the Yorkshire Post; and Vivien Hepworth, one of the PCC's lay Commissioners.

Topics covered over the course of the afternoon included: the relationship between a publicly-accountable organisation and the media; the sharp increase in the number of complaints to the PCC over the past year; the process by which Commissioners and the PCC's Chairman are appointed; crime reporting in the local press; and the press system of self-regulation in general. Questions at the PCC's Open Days are not tabled in advance and, although invitations are sent to individuals and organisations who might have a specific interest in attending, widescale advertising in the local media encourages anyone with a general interest in the press to come along.

Prior to the Q&A session, PCC staff also ran a complaints surgery, which allowed people who had a particular problem or query to discuss it in private, or to seek some general advice. This can be particularly useful for sensitive matters or for people who have not used the PCC's service before and need some guidance.

The PCC has held two Open Days a year since 2003. Details about further Open Days in 2008 will be posted on this website in due course. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Tonia Milton, Information and Events Manager on 020 7831 0022 or tonia.milton@pcc.org.uk.

YORKSHIRE POST - Published on **Monday 18 February 2008 07:55**

Newspaper watchdog has no complaints about his new role

SIR Christopher Meyer has made a career out of handling sensitive issues. As British Ambassador to the United States, he was our most senior overseas diplomat when the 9/11 attacks happened and the United States prepared to invade Iraq.

Such a high-profile, high-pressure role has proved to be a perfect grounding for his job as chairman of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the body that oversees how newspapers, their websites, and magazines go about the business of gathering, reporting, commenting upon and presenting material to their readers.

His organisation is the court of appeal for those who feel they have been misrepresented, unfairly treated or harassed by publications ranging from the red-top national tabloids to the smallest of weekly newspapers. Refereeing such disputes can be a matter of the most delicate diplomacy that balances the public's right to know against an individual's right to privacy.

Last year, Sir Christopher and his team were kept especially busy. Complaints to the PCC hit a record high of 4,340. The single most complained-about article appeared in a national tabloid and was a commentary on the disappearance of toddler Madeleine McCann in Portugal, which attracted 485. In second place, with 143 complaints, was a sticker on the front of a magazine aimed at young men featuring the disabled son of glamour model Katie Price.

But for all the record number of complaints, Sir Christopher believes the printed media is in good health and doing its job well. "The first question politicians ask me is if I think standards are declining in the Press," he said.

"I don't think standards have declined. The rise in the number of complaints has a lot to do with the PCC being much more visible, and emails and the internet making it very much easier to contact us. I would expect the number of complaints to us to continue to climb.

"During my time as a diplomat, I lived in eight different countries, and although there are challenges, we have a more vibrant, progressive and diverse newspaper industry than in any of those countries."

Sir Christopher is keen to raise the PCC's profile, and so tomorrow he'll be in Leeds with his team for the latest in a series of public meetings held in key cities around Britain. The sessions are split into two – a surgery where those who believe they have a problem with the Press can get advice, and a question-and-answer session about the PCC's work.

"This is part of a series of visits we have made regularly outside London," he said. "One of the things we want to get over is that we don't sit in an ivory tower in the capital making rulings about the treatment of celebrities in the national newspapers."

The programme of visits has taken Sir Christopher to Manchester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh so far, where audiences of between 30 and 150 have gathered, some to debate issues of Press freedoms versus responsibilities, others to raise specific grievances.

"The kind of questions we like are the ones where we can say 'Right, this is what we can do for you if you are being harassed or your children are being bothered, or you're in hospital and you wake up to find a journalist standing at the end of your bed,' because nine out of 10 complaints don't come from celebrities, they come from ordinary people," said Sir Christopher.

And there are some vexed questions to be answered. One of the growth areas of complaints to the PCC concerns so-called "citizen journalism", where the public can get direct access to websites to post news and views. Sir Christopher's view is that the public should place its trust in websites of proven integrity, like those associated with established newspapers.

"You have even got citizen paparazzi where anyone with a camera on their mobile phone can go whizzing around. The principle that you have to restate and restate over citizen journalists is that the buck still stops with the editor. They still have to make the choice of what goes in.

"There are publications which fall under our responsibility, and there is some wild and woolly stuff on the internet that does not. As far as blogs are concerned, I believe there will be a process of natural selection. Readers will soon sort out what they can rely on and what they can't. As time goes by, a lot of these bloggers will fall by the wayside.

"If you have a well-known and respected brand, that is very important. The integrity of the brand becomes very important, and if you can see information in that publication or on the website that tells you that you can go to the PCC if you wish to raise a grievance, then it becomes a reinforcement of that brand's integrity. You're not going to get that on a blog."

The PCC Open Day will be held in the Albert Room of Leeds Town Hall. A surgery will take place from 2.45pm until 3.45. A question and answer session will start at 4pm, chaired by Sir Christopher Meyer. The panel will also include the Editor of the Yorkshire Post, Peter Charlton, Tim Toulmin, Director of the PCC, and Vivien Hepworth, public member of the Commission.